

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

GALVESTON DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

HECTOR FERNANDO BLANCO

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CRIMINAL NUMBER G-18-26

FACTUAL STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF GUILTY PLEA

The United States of America, by and through Ryan K. Patrick, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas, and Kenneth A. Cusick, Assistant United States Attorney, hereby states as follows:

I.

If this case proceeded to trial, the United States of America believes it could prove each element of the offense of Assault within the Special Maritime and Territorial Jurisdiction of the United States, in violation of Title 18, U.S.C. §§ 7, 113(a)(8), and 3238, beyond a reasonable doubt with admissible evidence of the following facts. The following facts, among others, would be offered to establish the Defendant's guilt:

II.

On November 18, 2018, HECTOR FERNANDO BLANCO intentionally assaulted Morgan Greer in Cabin #6652 aboard the Royal Caribbean cruise ship "Liberty of the Seas". Ms. Greer at the time was a dating and intimate partner to Mr. BLANCO. According to Ms. Greer, Mr. BLANCO assaulted Ms. Greer by intentionally placing his hand and then a bath towel over her mouth, and then with the towel twisted he wrapped it around her neck and dragged her on the

floor of the cabin. Ms. Greer believed that Mr. BLANCO was attempting to strangle and choke (or suffocate) her. Ms. Greer also believed that she bit Mr. BLANCO on one of his hands during the scuffle. According to Ms. Greer, Mr. BLANCO tripped and Ms. Greer was able to run out of the cabin and report the incident to security personnel aboard the ship. An investigation was begun by the Security Office aboard the "Liberty of The Seas", and completed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation once the ship arrived in Galveston, Texas.

Once the ship arrived in Galveston, FBI agents met the ship and began their investigation of what was alleged to have occurred. Physical evidence was preserved from Cabin #6652 consisting of two (2) hand towels, a T-shirt Ms. Greer had been wearing at the time of the assault, and two (2) shirts Mr. BLANCO had been wearing at the time of the assault. One of the towels was found on a cushion in Cabin #6652 and the other on the floor next to the bed from the same cabin. The towel from the cushion, designated Item 1 by the FBI Laboratory, had a small amount of human hair attached to it and what appeared to be blood smeared on it as well. Some of the hair pieces found on Item 1 also had the root portion attached. From the root portion, DNA samples were extracted and compared to DNA samples submitted by Ms. Greer and Mr. BLANCO. Based upon forensic analysis of the DNA samples obtained from Item 1, Ms. Greer, and Mr. BLANCO, it would be the opinion of the FBI Forensic Examiner that the hair belonged to Ms. Greer. The DNA samples taken from Ms. Greer and Mr. BLANCO were compared to what appeared to be human blood found on the cushion (Item 1). The FBI Forensic Examiner who analyzed these DNA samples would testify that in his opinion the blood on the cushion (Item 1) could have belonged to either Ms. Greer or Mr. BLANCO, however the likelihood ratio was higher for Mr. BLANCO than Ms. Greer.

Ms. Greer is a citizen and national of the United States. The assault occurred aboard the Royal Caribbean cruise ship "Liberty of the Seas", which at the time was a foreign vessel registered in the Bahamas. At the time of the assault, the "Liberty of The Seas" was located approximately 45 miles from Galveston, Texas, in the Gulf of Mexico. The maritime boundary for the State of Texas is three (3) statute miles, and for the United States the territorial boundary is 12 nautical miles seaward from the baselines of the United States. The "Liberty of the Seas" began the cruise from a previously scheduled departure from Galveston, Texas on or about November 10, 2018. The ship was scheduled to return to Galveston, Texas on November 18, 2018.

RYAN K. PATRICK
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

By: 

KENNETH A. CUSICK
Assistant United States Attorney
Southern District of Texas